



EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT NEWS

The Monthly Electronic Newsletter of
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Members of the Goffstown CERT displaying their certificate for the President's Volunteer Service Award

GOFFSTOWN CERT RECEIVES NATIONAL AWARD – The Goffstown Citizen Emergency Response Team (CERT) has received the President's Volunteer Service Award in recognition of its work in the community. The 45-member team performs a variety of volunteer services and assisted in the response to flooding in May 2006 and April 2007. The team also participates in training exercises and works closely with Goffstown Police. It was one of the first CERTs organized in New Hampshire and was founded in 2002. The President's Volunteer Service Award is given by the President's Council on Service and Civic Participation, which was created by President Bush to recognize the valuable contribution that volunteers make to the nation.

PREPAREDNESS CONFERENCE HELD IN MANCHESTER – The fourth annual Emergency Preparedness Conference, “Reinforcing the Foundation,” was held in Manchester on June 25, bringing together more than 400 state and local public safety and public health personnel from all over New Hampshire. In opening remarks, Safety Commissioner John J. Barthelmes noted the improvements New Hampshire has made in communications interoperability and predicted further improvements in information sharing as the state develops an intelligence center to process information on terrorism, crime and other hazards facing the state. In his opening comments, Health and Human Services Commissioner Nicholas Toumpas said new legislation gives the state the power to ration pharmaceuticals and close public places in the event of a public health emergency.

A plenary session covered the hostage incident at the Clinton campaign headquarters in Rochester last November 30th. Rochester Deputy Police Chief Mike Allen outlined numerous problems his department had to face during the six-hour standoff. The police and fire departments had to carry out the operation in a busy downtown area with nearby schools in session. Communications were a major problem because the cell phone system was quickly overwhelmed. Other problems included a large media contingent that revealed police movements and the assimilation of law enforcement personnel from a variety of agencies.

Breakout sessions at the conference covered Lyme’s self-sufficient emergency plan, the FBI’s Weapons of Mass Destruction plan, the N.H. Disaster Animal Response Team and other topics.

LISA MICHAUD WINS STOVEPIPE AWARD – Lisa Michaud, Executive Director of the Greater Manchester Chapter of the American Red Cross, was the winner of the first annual Stovepipe Award, given at the Emergency Preparedness Conference. The award, announced at last year’s conference by Homeland Security and Emergency Management Director Christopher M. Pope, is given to the person who does the most to break down “stovepipes” that separate agencies and impede effective cooperation among emergency responders. She was nominated for her role in establishing a COAD, or Community Organizations Active in Disasters, in the Manchester area. The COAD was particularly effective in delivering assistance to more than 100 Manchester residents made homeless by two major fires earlier this year.

SESSION DETAILS DIFFERENCES IN HEALTH, OTHER EMERGENCIES – A breakout session at the Emergency Preparedness Conference was devoted to the differences between public health emergencies and other more conventional disasters that responders may be called upon to deal with. Unlike floods, hurricane or fires where emergency management, fire or police departments lead the response, in a public health emergency the state Division of Public Health is in charge. Public Health has its own Incident Command Center, which would coordinate with the state EOC in leading the response. Another difference with a public health emergency is that 19 All-Health Hazard Regions would set up points of distribution for pharmaceuticals. There are no regional or county emergency management agencies in New Hampshire.

That session was conducted by HSEM Director Christopher M. Pope and Joseph Arcidiacono, Director of Emergency Services at DHHS.

2-1-1 SERVICE BEGINS STATEWIDE OPERATION – New Hampshire residents needing a variety of human services or financial assistance can get referrals for help by calling 2-1-1, the new statewide help line. The state 2-1-1 operation is a cooperative project of New Hampshire's 10 United Way organizations and Public Service Company of New Hampshire (PSNH). It operates out of PSNH's Manchester call center, with information specialists trained and paid by the United Ways. The service replaces five regional information and referral hotlines operated by United Ways. In addition to the United Ways and PSNH, 2-1-1 is sponsored by the State of New Hampshire, Citizens Bank Foundation, N.H. Charitable Foundation and Exeter Hospital. Forty-four other states operate 2-1-1 systems.

PRESENTATION OUTLINES PRIVATE SECTOR ROLE IN EMERGENCIES – With about 80 percent of all infrastructure owned by the private sector, business leaders have a key role to play in major disasters. That is probably not something they spend a lot of time thinking about, but it was the message of a presentation by HSEM Director Christopher M. Pope at the quarterly meeting of the N.H. Economic Development Association on June 6th. Pope told representatives of businesses and regional economic development agencies that disasters hurt businesses and their employees and they need to have emergency plans in place. Without Continuity of Business planning, he said, businesses could find that they are unable to recover from disasters. That message was driven home by Douglas Dickson, assistant rector of St. Paul's School in Concord, which suffered millions of dollars worth of damage in the Mother's Day flood of 2006 and had to care for students and staff. The school has a crisis management team and an emergency operations center. It has also updated its insurance coverage. Those strategies can be adapted to any private sector organization.

DBHRT PROVIDES ASSISTANCE DURING TRAGEDIES - The Disaster Behavioral Health Response Team (DBHRT) has been involved in response to several tragedies over the past couple of months. In April, a mother and two children died in a fire in Franklin. DBHRT members provided a compassionate presence and support to students, parents, faculty and the community at large. Interventions included psychological first aid, crisis counseling referral and distribution of materials related to grief, loss and coping. Also in April, there was a sudden death of a student in Greenland, the same school that experienced the death of a student in the Portsmouth Parade accident last year. DBHRT met with students individually and in small groups. Sessions were also provided for parents and faculty.

Over the summer DBHRT will be developing suggested language for schools' emergency response plans. This will address issues such as: structuring a response to a traumatic event, working with traumatized staff, suicide prevention policies and procedures, sample letters to parents and faculty and a checklist for principals. For more information regarding DBHRT, contact Paul Deignan at 223-3621 or Paul.Deignan@hsem.nh.gov.

MAJOR EXERCISE HELD IN PORTSMOUTH HARBOR – One of the largest exercises in the nation involving port security was held during the second week of June, involving the Coast Guard, U.S. Navy and local and state responders. According to the scenario for Operation Frontier Sentinel, a commercial motor vessel was damaged by an external explosion in Portsmouth Harbor at the same time a harbor tugboat was taken over by attackers armed with automatic weapons. The attacks prompted the simulated closing of marine traffic on the Piscataqua River and motor vehicle traffic on the four area bridges. A unified command post was established at Pease International Tradeport, which included the Coast Guard, Navy, N.H. Homeland Security and Emergency Management and Portsmouth Fire. The exercise continued for the entire week.

HIGH TEMPERATURES CAUSE RECORD JUNE POWER DEMAND – The thermometer came close to 100 degrees on June 9th and 10th. The mini-heat wave didn't last long, but it did create demand for electric power in the region that shattered the record for June. ISO-New England, the regional power grid operator, said demand reached 26,149 megawatts (MW) on June 10th, topping the previous record for June of 26,055 MW set in 2006. The all-time record demand for the region was 28,130 MW, set on August 2nd, 2006. Grid officials are predicting peak demand of 28,000 MW for the summer and they say the system has sufficient capacity to supply that.